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**The Self-Perceived Role of Christian Chaplains
In New Zealand State Schools**

A thesis presented in fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy,
in Religious Studies
at Massey University

Maria Madelene Yapp

2003



CERTIFICATE OF REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

This is to certify that the research carried out in the Doctoral Thesis entitled
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Abstract

State school chaplaincy is a recent phenomenon in New Zealand state schools. It was introduced in the 1980s by the Churches Education Commission (CEC), after the Bible in School programmes, as a voluntary service to care for children in state schools. Currently CEC promotes that a chaplain is a “confidential ear” and “a caring trusted friend” and states that chaplaincy “supports the pastoral care networks in New Zealand schools for students, staff, parents and care-givers and Boards of Trustees”. However, definition of the key terms has not been provided and no research has determined what chaplains do. This thesis explores the work of state school chaplains, by participant observation, questionnaires, and interviews, examining who these chaplains are, the nature of Chaplaincy Assessing Resourcing Equipping (C.A.R.E.) courses, and how chaplains “support the pastoral networks of New Zealand schools”. Results indicate that they, as a group, display an autonomy, independence, and freedom not clearly discernible in their job descriptions of “confidential listening ears” and “caring trusted friends”. They seek the advantages of both remaining apart from and a part of the school establishment. They support state schools, by working under the guidance of the school staff and acting as independent workers and consultants. As “confidential listening ears”, they have found their way from school playgrounds to staff meetings. The autonomy chaplains claim may have derived from CEC’s failure to provide clear operational definitions of the chaplaincy role, lack of adequate assessing and equipping at chaplaincy courses, and/or lack of sufficient monitoring and supervision on the job. Their extensive involvement in helping and caring for state schools, including evangelization, may have stemmed from the fact that they, as Christian helpers, want to act like Jesus or ‘be Jesus’. The meaning of ‘being Jesus’ is explored by examining the idea of loving one’s neighbours as oneself, the example of Jesus, and Jesus’ account of the parable of *The Good Samaritan*. It is suggested that acting like Jesus or ‘being Jesus’ includes not only helping but also evangelization. However, evangelizing in state schools contravenes CEC’s recommendations. It is recommended that CEC clarify its intention for state school chaplaincy and consider both the appropriateness and intent of the use of the title ‘chaplain’, as well as provide precise operational definitions for the key terms of the chaplaincy roles.

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